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SUBJECT: 2010 Afghan International Women of Courage Nominees

REF: STATE 111471

1. Women in Afghanistan face extraordinary circumstances that frequently prevent them from attending school, working outside the home, or even living free from the fear of becoming the victim of domestic violence. However, the number of courageous Afghan women who fight against pervasive cultural norms to better the lives of all women in their country is outstanding. Despite serious threats to their own safety, sometimes by members of their own families, numerous women in Kabul and the provinces continue their work to advance women's rights in Afghanistan. Embassy Kabul recommends Colonel Shafiqa Quraishi, followed by Judge Mihro Hamid and Baghlan Provincial Council Member Shokuria Assil for the 2010 Secretary's International Women of Courage Award.

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Police Colonel Shafiqa Quraishi  
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2. Colonel Shafiqa Quraishi  
Director of Gender, Human, and Child Rights, Ministry of the Interior (MoI)  
Kabul, Afghanistan  
DOB: 06 November 1970, Afghanistan  
Telephone: 079-773-5854; E-mail: Gmu\_Director@yahoo.com  
Home Address: Sarai Ghazni Debori, Karte 3,  
Kabul, Afghanistan  
Passport: (number will be provided in septel)  
Languages Spoken: Dari, Pashto, and currently enrolled in English course

3. Colonel Shafiqa Quraishi began her career in the Afghan National Police and continues to work for the Ministry of the Interior in Kabul, Afghanistan. She has served as the Director of Gender, Human, and Child Rights since 2008, where she strives to ensure other Afghan women are granted the respect they deserve.

4. Throughout her career, Col Shafiqa has progressed and instituted change that positively affects the future of Afghan women in the workforce. Colonel Shafiqa established and headed a working group to create the Afghan National Gender Recruitment Strategy Plan, with the vision to increase women working under the Ministry of the Interior to 5,000 and to "Increase the membership/physical presence of women in the MoI at all levels in order to improve the quality of service to the women and children of Afghanistan." In addition to recruiting more women, the plan secures benefits and incentives to promote women in the workforce. Some incentives include childcare, healthcare (specifically for women during pregnancy), security, and to provide literacy and other training in an effort to maximize the potential for career advancement.

5. As of March 8, 2009, Colonel Shafiqa has assisted in processing 42 promotions for women working in the Afghan National Police who had been passed over for promotion for the past 10 years. She continues to advocate for other women working for the MoI, including in the Afghan National Police (ANP), as well as for women and children throughout Afghanistan. Through her work Colonel Shafiqa consistently strives to raise awareness about gender rights and the role of women in the ANP. She also forged a strong partnership with

representatives from the Combined Security Transition Command - Afghanistan (CSTC-A), which oversees police training. She always maintains positive lines of communication, is consistently available to answer questions, and generously assists with the coordination of training for women in the ANP.

¶6. Colonel Shafiqa's dedication to helping Afghans also extends outside of her professional capacity. At the MoI and the Childcare Center she has helped coordinate humanitarian missions in which clothing, toys, and school supplies were delivered to Afghan teachers and children

¶7. Colonel Shafiqa has shown leadership by initiating programs that strengthen the Afghan National Police. Improving the ANP's capacity is vital to the Embassy's goal of transferring responsibility for security to the Afghans. Her work to promote other women in the ANP exemplifies the spirit of unity and gender equality which Afghanistan needs to succeed. Colonel Shafiqa has consistently risked her own personal well-being to help all Afghan people, but especially Afghan women, as well as the U.S. mission in Afghanistan.

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Senior Judge Mihro Hamid  
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¶8. Biographical and contact information will be sent septel.

¶9. Senior Judge Mihro Hamid was born in 1955 and graduated from the Sharia Law faculty of Kabul University in 1976. Thereafter she completed Afghanistan's Judicial Training Course and became a judge in 1978. Since then she has worked in numerous courts, serving 12

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years in the Appellate Tribunal of the Kabul Provincial Court. In 2002, she was appointed a member of the Independent Judicial Reform Commission. In 2005, she became a counselor to the Supreme Court Public Security Tribunal.

¶10. Supreme Court Chief Justice Azimi appointed Judge Hamid to be Chief of the Appellate Court of the Central Narcotics Tribunal in December 2008. Since then, she has served with distinction, presiding over numerous serious narcotics trials and clearing an enormous backlog of cases which had accumulated because other judges feared reprisals against the court. She has become known for her fearlessness, her keen intellect, and her admirable judicial temperament.

¶11. In a recent interview with the U.K. Guardian, Judge Hamid decried the recent pardons by her government of major drug traffickers. She noted the importance of the rule of law and said that there would be no justice in Afghanistan until the president supported a judiciary under constant threat from organized crime.

¶12. While Judge Hamid's work does not focus explicitly on women's issues, her courage to fight for social justice on behalf of all Afghans is truly exemplary. Her work shows other Afghan women that their voices are worth being heard, and that they, too, have the power to encourage positive change in Afghan society.

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Provincial Council Member Shokuria Assil  
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¶13. Full Name: Shokuria Assil  
Title: Provincial Council Member  
Date of Birth: June 15, 1973  
Address: Pol-i-Khumri City, Baghlan Province, Afghanistan  
Country of Birth: Afghanistan  
Citizenship: Afghanistan  
Contact information: shokrial@gmail.com; 0708 968 674  
Languages: Dari; Pashto; working-level English and Urdu  
No passport to date

¶14. Ms. Assil is a true leader who is committed to empowering women in Afghanistan. As one of four female members of the Baghlan

Provincial Council, she embodies the ideals of democracy in her efforts to bring a voice, opportunity, and justice to all members of Afghan society, regardless of ethnicity, economic status, or, in particular, gender. In her work, Ms. Assil addresses issues that others neglect (advocating for programs for the mentally unstable), is an innovator (starting a networking group for professional women), and a pioneer (pushing to start a driving school for females). She has promoted women in media, created linkages between remote communities and their provincial government, and worked to advance educational opportunities for young girls.

¶15. Ms. Assil's most significant contribution to the advancement of women's rights in Baghlan has been to increase the accountability and responsiveness of the government regarding the needs and treatment of females. In one particular case last year, the Ministry of Education published negative information in the media about three female teachers in Baghlan Province; the provincial Department of Education subsequently fired these individuals. Ms. Assil challenged the Ministry. She capably argued that the firings were unjust, resulting in the women regaining their positions, eventually getting a representative of the Ministry to come to Baghlan to apologize publicly.

¶16. In a case in Nahrin, a girl who had been gang-raped and rejected by her family was handed over to a step-uncle, who was involved in illegal activities. After the situation was brought to Ms. Assil's attention, the Governor, who was from the same region and knew the four men involved in the rape, strongly advised her to drop the case. Ms. Assil forged ahead and successfully convinced the appropriate government entities to engage in the case. In the end, the family agreed to accept the girl home if the government could remove her from the step-uncle, and the girl returned safely to her family.

¶17. Ms. Assil's achievements are exceptional, particularly given that provincial and local female officials are not often afforded the same degree of legitimacy within the government as are males and are often shut out of decision-making and key events. Significantly, violence against women has risen in Baghlan Province and the female officials here have been recipients of kidnapping and death threats - all, including Ms. Assil, have stories of near misses. Police and security force members often encourage Ms. Assil to cease her work and fail to respond appropriately to her requests for assistance. Despite the extremely challenging circumstances, and in the face of threats to herself and her livelihood, Ms. Assil has not only stood firm but pushed ahead. She has risked her life to assist others, to promote the greater good, and to continue working towards everything she believes in.